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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ITALIAN VIEWS ON ISRAELI WEOG MEMBERSHIP

REF: STATE 235219

Classified By: Pol M/C Tom Countryman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. Pol M/C discussed reftel demarche with key MFA officials on November 5. While our Italian interlocutors are sympathetic to Israel's membership in consultative groups at selected UN agencies, it is unlikely to take action in the absence of EU consensus and pending the outcome of UNSC reform. End summary.

12. (C) Pol M/C delivered reftel demarche to MFA Deputy DG for Multilateral Political Affairs Claudio Bisogniero on November 15. Also present were Alessandro Busacca, the head of the MFA's UN Office, and Luca Ferrari, head of the MFA's Office for the Eastern Mediterranean. Bisogniero's initial reaction was that there is a general nodding of heads on this issue whenever Italy raises it, but no action is ever taken. He asked us to share responses we had received from other WEOG members, so that Italy could see if anyone else is ready to stand up and move this issue.

13. (C) Ferrari commented that Italy needs EU consensus before it can act, to which Busacca noted that the issue did not come up at the latest COMUN (EU meeting on UN issues). Bisogniero added that there is a significant difference between the WEOG in New York, which does not discuss substantive issues other than candidacies, and the WEOG in agencies like the IAEA, where Israel holds a very different position on non-proliferation matters than other WEOG members.

14. (C) Pol M/C responded that, as long as we are discussing UN reform, Israel should be granted the same rights as other member states, and that its exclusion from the Asian group makes it a second-class member. WEOG can address this by giving Israel interim membership in all fora.

15. (C) Comment: Post will continue to press on this issue and probably will continue to get a sympathetic ear from the Italians. We note, however, that in the next year or two Italy, Germany, and a few other countries will continue to view this and all UN-related issues through the prism of how it affects UNSC reform. It is hard to see how Italy will take the lead on this issue when it might only cost it UNGA votes from the Arab bloc. End comment.

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